

CATHERINE'S EMBASSY TO FLORENCE

palace, to the sound of music and salvos, and their notary read aloud the letters announcing the agreement that had been made between the Pope and the Republic. All Florence was illuminated, and the rejoicings were prolonged into the night. But on the next day, July 19, like a bolt from the blue, a rumour reached the Signoria that the whole State was on the brink of a precipice. Several arrests were made, and, at nightfall, one Simoncino, called Bugigatto, being examined under torture in the chapel of the palace, confessed that there was a plot for a general uprising of the lowest orders on the following morning. His cries were overheard by an artisan, who was mending the dock of the palace and was in the secret, and he gave the alarm. On the morning of Tuesday, July 20, the whole populace was up in arms, and the disastrous revolution of the *Ciompi*—the unskilled workers who, having no guild of their own, were deprived of political rights—burst, like a tidal wave, over Florence.

The chief question at issue was the right of association and combination, with which was connected a number of grievances especially on the part of those subjected to the consuls of the *Arts della Lana*.¹ But in the anarchy of the next few days, although the petition of the insurgents had been instantly accepted by the Signoria and passed through the Councils, all principle seemed confused in a carnival of outrage. Led by a huckster, Betto di Ciardo, carrying the great banner of Justice which they had taken from the palace of the Executor, one portion of the mob sacked and burned the houses of those of the wealthy citizens who were obnoxious to them, while another seized upon those whom they regarded as their friends, and, willingly or unwillingly, made them knights in the name of the People. Luigi Guicciardini, the Gonfaloniere, found himself included in both classes. The Eight of the War and Salvestro de' Medici were among those knighted, Buonaccorso di Lapo Giovanni one of those whose houses were destroyed. On the evening of the second day, July 21, the Podesta, Giovanni dei ¹ Cf. Rodolico, *op. cit.*, pp. 180 *et seq.* 247